



Climate change and developing-country cities: Implications for environmental health and equity

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Abstract:

Climate change is an emerging threat to global public health. It is also highly inequitable, as the greatest risks are to the poorest populations, who have contributed least to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The rapid economic development and the concurrent urbanization of poorer countries mean that developing-country cities will be both vulnerable to health hazards from climate change and, simultaneously, an increasing contributor to the problem. We review the specific health vulnerabilities of urban populations in developing countries and highlight the range of large direct health effects of energy policies that are concentrated in urban areas. Common vulnerability factors include coastal location, exposure to the urban heat-island effect, high levels of outdoor and indoor air pollution, high population density, and poor sanitation. There are clear opportunities for simultaneously improving health and cutting GHG emissions most obviously through policies related to transport systems, urban planning, building regulations and household energy supply. These influence some of the largest current global health burdens, including approximately 800,000 annual deaths from ambient urban air pollution, 1.2 million from road-traffic accidents, 1.9 million from physical inactivity, and 1.5 million per year from indoor air pollution. GHG emissions and health protection in developing-country cities are likely to become increasingly prominent in policy development. There is a need for a more active input from the health sector to ensure that development and health policies contribute to a preventive approach to local and global environmental sustainability, urban population health, and health equity.

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Resource Description

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Air Pollution, Extreme Weather Event, Human Conflict/Displacement, Temperature, Unspecified Exposure

Air Pollution: Ozone

Extreme Weather Event: Flooding, Hurricanes/Cyclones

Temperature: Extreme Heat

Geographic Feature:

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Urban

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Global or Unspecified

Health Co-Benefit/Co-Harm (Adaption/Mitigation):

specification of beneficial or harmful impacts to health resulting from efforts to reduce or cope with greenhouse gases

A focus of content

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

General Health Impact

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Mitigation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern:

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Low Socioeconomic Status

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Review

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified